

Broken Past Bright Future

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[Eridan Ampora & Dirk Strider](#), [Mituna Captor/Latula Pyrope](#), [Mituna Captor & Eridan Ampora & Dirk Strider & Latula Pyrope](#), [Dirk Strider & Latula Pyrope](#), [Mituna Captor & Eridan Ampora](#), [more relationships to be added - Relationship](#)

Character:

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Broken Past Bright Future

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Summary

Many have heard rumors of a new faction coming out of nowhere. It was hard not to hear of it when they took over Skaia Laboratory, one of the most dangerous areas left unclaimed- a standing structure of the old era before monsters began roaming the land and people didn't have powers.

Skaia Labs would have been a great place of resource or even a safe haven if it weren't for the fact there'd been strong ass monsters that no one could beat. But now? Someone actually beat the monsters and claimed the place, holy fuck was that both bad ass and very concerning. How many people did they have? How many were adroits? How strong were they?

Many groups and factions' attention was grabbed by the new faction. Wondering if they could ally with them, conquer them, etc. But they all had to be careful, they didn't know how large and competent the new faction was...

"TUNA DIRK'S HIDIN' MY SHIT AND TRAPPIN' MY ROOM AGAIN!!"

"Tula, Eridan is bitching and won't give back my brony merch."

"Tulip I love you, but your cooking is shit."

"Babe, baby, you're so radical and the love of my life but shut the fuck up."

Four doomed kids get to live on an apocalyptic Earth and cause trouble.

Notes

Self Restraint died and I ended with this monstrosity.
And yes, the tags read right- this is a story I will actively try and put drawings, aka panels, into!
So yeah, expect homestuck-esque panel drawings during this entire insanity.

Also major thanks to everyone in the Discord Server that helped me with this!
And also encouraged me to do this so hehe, they're partial to the blame as well but mostly it's my fault since I instigated the entire thing X]

At any rate, I hope you guys enjoy!

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Shaded orange eyes looked up to the sky, watching the clouds pass as the owner of said eyes sat on his ass, legs crossed underneath him in the classic lotus style leg folding. A totally awesome katana laid on his lap and glinted from the somewhat dim sunlight. Dirk Strider sighed slightly, seemed like a peaceful day so far, there was that.

Besides him, a certain four-horned troll babbles and rambles as he lays half on the ground and half on the slanted satellite dish that laid propped on the roof of the laboratory. Mituna Captor continued to ramble, today was a bad-ish day for him, he was coherent at least and not incomprehensible nor completely broken down, he was happy.

At the middle of the satellite dish, a second troll with one pair of pointy horns listened to Mituna's rambles with a fond look, one that had hidden traces of sadness. Latula Pyrope leaned against her dragon-headed cane as she listened to her matesprit. He'd been doing so well, but it was just about time he'd relapse into a mess, at the very least he wasn't screaming bloody murder and babbling in broken lispy nonsensical words. She glanced to her back though, to the third and final troll that sat near the edge of the satellite.

Said third troll listened with half an ear, gun tucked in his arm but ready to fire at any moment should there be a sign of danger. Eridan Ampora took in deep breaths, idly listening to Mituna's ramblings but also keeping himself aware- he and Dirk were in charge of protection for now. At least he was, he was the only one who could give a ranged attack with his Ahab's Crosshairs.

"-nd SPLAT! Ehehehehehehehehe." Mituna cackled in an unsteady but happy tone, flailing an arm as he used the other to cushion his face on the

ground.

Latula smiled, "That sounds totally awesome babe."

Dirk glances over to her, frowning at the sadness that subtly tugged her voice. He shook his head and focused back on the forest that surrounded their current residency, the forest was eerily silent today- which always was a warning sign. Something dangerous was lurking in the forest again, scaring away the birds and forcing the weaker creatures into hiding, if they were capable of prayer, no doubt they'd be praying that whatever was prowling the thicket wouldn't find them.

Those creatures were mostly used to them by now, months of scouring and exploring the area, clearing it from most of the danger.

But now, something foreign had entered the forest, creeping within the shade of the trees and no doubt attempting to establish dominance and power over the woods. Big mistake, seeing as *they* were the powerhouses and predominant figures here. They've claimed the forest, they've claimed the lab, this was their *home* now. They'd spent days clearing the forest of major danger, it took even more days to completely clear the labs- they weren't even sure they'd gotten everything but it was safe enough for them. However it took months to truly get used to their new shelter and even more to truly call it home.

There was nary a sound as they lounged on the roof of the labs, the satellite being used as a makeshift lounge slash perch for the trolls with Eridan at the top so he could snipe anything that would come from the forest.

As much as Dirk wanted to go into the forest, seek the dangerous monster that dared to prowl through their forest- Mituna was having an off day. It wasn't the worst day, he was happy at least, but it was best to stay together whenever he was like this. Just in case.

Besides, Eridan was adamant to snipe today. Might as well indulge him before he bitched about how he hadn't handled Ahab's Crosshairs in a while. Dirk could explore the woods and find something else another time,

when Mituna was feeling better and Latula was genuinely happier than she seemed.

Finally, after a while, Dirk's keen ears heard something else other than Mituna's rambling.

He's not the only one to have heard it, Latula shifts in place but keeps focus on Mituna even as she tenses instinctively to it- Eridan on the other hand readies his gun, the diamond-shaped tip steadily glowed brighter as he steadied it at the forest, breathing calmly.

There's faint rustling in the woods, near subtly if not for the fact it was exactly something they'd been listening for. There's slight hissing now, and Eridan keeps the Crosshairs steady, firm, ready to fire at anything that dares to come at them.

It happens quickly, the incoming attack.

From the tree tops, hidden underneath the pine and branches, a long creature launches itself from the thicket. Snake-like in nature, but far from being an actual snake. It was gigantic in size, its head alone in height was as tall as 5'8, the height of an average man, and its length in body was probably thrice as long. It was made of tough leathery grey skin, the head was ovalish in shape, its face was flat and disfigured, there was a pale crown of horns on its head and it had no pupils but the eyes were wide and pale blue. Its jaws were unhinging and its teeth weren't sharp but they were jagged, the tongue was a strange shade of green and there was a strange secretion of brown liquid coming from its mouth.

Dirk had no idea what the fuck it was, but it resembled an enemy from the game so he and the others decided to call it and its kind 'basilisks' to make it easier. They'd encountered it before, but this was easily the largest basilisk monster that they'd seen so far in a long time.

Still, despite the basilisk being gigantic and definitely dangerous and terrifying- it stood no chance compared to Ahab's Crosshairs. Nothing really did, and if it did- well, they'd be more interesting compared to the rest of the monsters that were around.

Before the basilisk could even come near the compound, Eridan's skillful shot rang true, Ahab's lasered shot nearly silent save for the slight sound it made as it pierced the basilisks' skull. It left a scalding, cauterized hole in the monster's head as it fell down to the forest floor, right outside the laboratory. Dead as a doorknob.

"SCORE!" Mituna exclaimed, having seen the entire thing along with Dirk and Latula, he chattered excitedly, "One for Erifuck!" Eridan didn't mind the name, used to it and he knew that Mituna didn't mean it.

"Thanks Tuna." Eridan smiled when he saw Mituna beam happy enough to control some of his psionics in a peaceful way, light blue and red spark around his horns as he lifted an arm into the air, chirping.

"TULIP LOOK I CAN SPARK!!"

"Heck yeah that's great babe!"

"Congrats Mituna, you can spark. Also we should do something about that basilisk at some point."

"At some point yeah."



Many have heard rumors of a new faction coming out of nowhere. It was hard not to hear of it when they took over Skaia Laboratory, one of the most dangerous areas left unclaimed- a standing structure of the old era before monsters began roaming the land and people didn't have powers.

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Session Kith was one such faction.

“We’ve got to be careful with these guys, who knows on who the fuck these powerhouses are like.”

“Which is exactly why we should establish contact as soon as we can to find out! We’d be the first to find out, and maybe we could work something out- you know how valuable stuff is from the SkaiaNet area!”

“We shouldn’t have to be the first ones to find out- we could just try to be second just to make sure things are a’ight. Let someone else be first so we can hear new rumors, new information on them.”

“I guess that makes sense but then again you’re totally being a paranoid fuck right now Dave, we can do this just fine. We’ll make plans, back up plans, back up back up plans, the usual stuff! We’ll be fine! If anything goes wrong, we call Bec like we always do.”

“We’ve already used Bec to escape the city, he’s fucking exhausted John.”

“Then we wait for him to rest up!”

“It’s going to take days for him to be at top shape.”

“Which will give us plenty of time to get ready!”

“...”

“Okay I’m here! ... Guys?”

Green eyes peered into the occupants of the room, three people were there but two were currently talking heatedly to each other while the third was sighing at their conversation. Though said third perked when she saw her at the doorway.

“Ah Jade, hello. You haven’t missed much, just these two going against each other once more.” Rose said with another sigh.



Jade stepped into the room, taking her rifle from her shoulder and letting it lay against the wall besides John’s hammer so she could join Roxy’s side. “Are they arguing about SkaiaNet and the guys who claimed it again?” She asked Rose quietly who hummed in confirmation.

“John is persistent that we can contact them and possibly form an alliance, and naturally Dave is wary against them seeing as they conquered SkaiaNet Labs and laid claim over the area itself.” Rose replied, listening to the conversation with half an ear now but she glanced at both Jade and the map that was laid out on the table.

It was the most recent map they had about SkaiaNet Labs and its forest, which was a year or two years old, the appropriate pins were pinned to the areas and reminded them on where most things were.

It's been weeks since it's been said that SkaiaNet and the forest surrounding it was recently claimed by a new faction entirely unheard of before. It was thought to be speculation and wild untrue rumors at first, who could be strong and resourceful enough to claim SkaiaNet Laboratory?

Ever since the start of the apocalypse, it had been an established fact that SkaiaNet was unconquerable. Even the strongest factions back then couldn't claim it, the monsters and mutants that roamed the forest and in the labs were just too strong for them.

Plenty of people tried, but most were wiped out and factions lost plenty of people, both regulars and adroit.

SkaiaNet Labs was just a monster's hovel, a place of death if you're not careful or if you're too near to the labs. It was registered as an X-Tiered area, just like the center of Lake Glub, the monster-made lake besides the Wind Deserts, another monster-made area.

No one knows how it started, but environments suddenly started to change, people and animals were suddenly evolving and mutating- it had been small at first, almost unnoticeable and was just steadily changing until almost a decade ago, where things suddenly escalated from an alarming four to a terrifying **thirteen** on the 'what the fuck' scale.

Society collapsed when there was a sudden surge of monsters, the abrupt change of biomes destroyed a lot of places- many cities and towns were buried, drowned, and destroyed from snow, sand, water, flora and fauna depending on the situation and location. They heard it was worse in other countries, but who knows.

The government had tried to contain it all and not collapse, but like in all Apocalypse situations, it fell and humans divided and then grouped together. Groups, organizations, factions. It was definitely a frenzy during the first few years after 'The Reckoning'.

They'd all been young when The Reckoning happened, and growing up in a frenzied Apocalypse was not easy but they managed.

Somewhat.

A lot of shit happened but here they were now, in a somewhat peaceful era of the apocalypse, they had to keep their guard against the monsters and any hostile factions that might try to conquer their area and faction.

Which lead to the now; trying to decide whether or not the newest faction that *somehow* conquered SkaiaNet Labs was worth contacting and whether or not they were hostile.

Jade's lips pursed and she spoke aloud, interrupting her cousin and Dave. "We're not exactly healed up from our last soiree John." She reminds them both, motioning to their injuries, and though they weren't really major, it was always best to be in top shape whenever going to dangerous areas like SkaiaNet and its forest.

Dave almost looked victorious, "We'd need Jane to help with that when she can." Until she continued and Dave gave her this kicked puppy look- or, well, as much of a kicked puppy look Dave could do with his usual stoic look. But Jade, Rose and John were adept in facial Strider language and that was definitely a kicked puppy look on Dave's face.

John beamed, "I was just about to suggest that! C'mon Dave, I've got a good feeling about this place. If we manage to ally with the faction in SkaiaNet we'd be able to gather better resources and finally investigate the place! It's been *eight years* Dave, Rose. We could finally find out more information about The Reckoning." He said, causing Dave to grimace and Rose to close her eyes.

"... It'd be interesting to see if my house is still standing within the forest." Rose finally said, smiling tiredly at the grinning John.

All three of them turned to look at Dave, who was silent.

"... Fuck, stop looking at me like that." Dave complained, shaking his head in exasperation, "Fine. We're going to the death area that is SkaiaNet Labs. But we're making a fuckton of plans okay? And we're going to make sure Jade's dog is tip top fucking shape yeah? Along with the rest of us."

“ Yes! ” The bucktoothed teen exclaimed victoriously, he quickly went to get some paper from somewhere in the room and start planning, motioning Jade and Rose to come closer to him so they could help him in the planning.

Dave sighed as he watched his best friends plan out their next expedition.

...

Well, at least now, Dirk’s plan could probably be possible. He glanced towards the corkboard, to the blueprint that was pinned at the bottom left of the board. There was supposed to be a satellite at the labs right? He’d get that, or at least something to that.

Damn did he miss his brother...

“Dave!” Dave blinked as John called out to him, obviously wanting him to contribute to the plan like always. With an exaggerated sigh, he sauntered over to help plan out their next mission.

“SNEAK PAST THE FUCKING WORM NEST YOU SAID, WE’D BE FUCKING FINE YOU SAID- SHIT!!”

“KK!!”

“I already said sorry motherfucker but hey! We got out running all up and going!”

“ *Less talking, more running! !*”



Karkat grabbed on to Gamzee's arm as he inadvertently slipped on a clump of sand on the ground- thankfully he was quick to get his equilibrium, and Sollux helped with his psionic energy. Behind them Nepeta hissed at the incoming gigantic worms that squirmed at the entrance of the alleyway.

And as much as he knew Nepeta could hold her own against the monsters, he knew that it was better to abscond right now. "NEPETA COME ON!!" He shouted back to his sister.

Reluctantly, she turned back, sheathing her claws into her gauntlet and ran after them- thankfully, at this time of day with the heat of the sand, the worms were slower than they should be. Not to mention they were entering Corvid territory. Actually it was a miracle that none of the giant birds had caught sight of the worms yet.

Still, they had to get out of there.

If there was something that he definitely hated when he came to this sand covered city, it was the fucking gigantic worms that nested around the place. The giant birds were just fine most of the time, they stayed up on the roofs and ledges of the buildings and built their nests there and there was rarely a time they had to approach their nests or the bird themselves so no, the birds weren't the problem with this sand-covered city. It was the worms.

It didn't take long as they took refuge and hid in a nearby abandoned building, the worms slithering past the building once they managed to get into the abandoned shelter, they were safe. For now.

Karkat leaned against the wall and panted, scowling as he tugged his hood over his head- it had gotten loose during the rapid absconding. He patted down himself, checking if anything he had on him had been lost or accidentally dropped- thankfully not.

"Here Karkitty." Nepeta offered her flask of water. "I could've taken them y'know." She told her brother, arms crossed as he accepted the flask and drank what he needed.

Karkat sighed, both in relief and exasperation as he handed his flask back to her. "I don't fucking doubt that Nep, but the point of this expedition is *not* to strife against monsters- if there's a moment to abscond, we fucking take that moment. Besides, you could take the worms, but not the corvids. You're a strong adroit Nepeta, but fuck's sake, I'm not losing my little sister to *birds* ." He shook his head, sighing as he looked at his two years younger sister.

Nepeta pouted, cat-ears flicking underneath her hat. She was a strong adroit, her genes and body had been mutated and somehow she had a lot of characteristics to a feline. Karkat was hesitant to use the word 'cat', at some points Nepeta did act like a cat but there were times that she acted like a lioness.

But hey, that was a physical adroit, those who had been mutated with clear physical changes. I.e. with extra limbs, animal characteristics- Karkat had even heard of an adroit that could grow plants from their skin.

“He’s a point there NP, you’re one tough cat but you gotta know how to pick your fights.” Sollux spoke up, sitting on an old but sturdy table, a walkie-talkie hand, he used his psionic energy to charge said device- Sollux had forgot to change the battery and it had died just earlier on.

Sollux was also an adroit, though his mutation consisted of him getting electrokinesis and the ability to generate static electricity. He was a psionic adroit, he was powerful, sure, but it was best to keep that under wraps. No one outside Mobius Drove knew how strong Sollux and his father was.

“Yeah kitty sister bitch, we gotta be all up and choosing in our strifing. Also, absconding be good for your stamina and shit. Gotta run like the fucking wind.” Gamzee agreed, sitting on the decrepit floor, smiling at them all in amusement.

Gamzee was an adroit as well, somewhat a psionic adroit but he was a fearmongering psychic adroit- he was also very strong, his vitality was off the charts and it took a *lot* to get him actually hurt. He was a powerhouse.

Karkat glared at Gamzee, “You can shut the fuck Gamzee, it was your fault we had to run like the fucking wind in the first place! I can’t believe I thought that sneaking past the worms was a good fucking idea! We should’ve used a detour.” He grumbled, rubbing his face tiredly.

Karkat wasn’t an adroit. Or, if he was then his powers were so insignificant and unnoticeable or they just hadn’t awakened yet in the years that the apocalypse had happened- which was something he doubted. So he was a regular human. No powers to speak of but he had experience and skill supporting him all the way up.

Gamzee just grinned at him and shrugged with a slightly sheepish look on his face. Karkat groaned and resisted the urge to throw his sheathed sickle at him.

“How’s the walkie Sollux?” He asked, turning to Sollux so the urge could go away.

Sollux glanced down to the sparking walkie, red and blue electricity sparking from his goggles and his hand. The sparks entered the walkie and he sent Karkat a thumbs up, "Should be good in a bit. So, what now leader?" He asked, hopping off of the table.

"Should we contact Kankri?" Nepeta questioned, glancing at Karkat before looking out the broken window of the building they were in. It was quiet sans the muffled sounds of loud cawing and flapping, maybe the worms were now discovered by the giant mutant birds and were being eaten. Hopefully that was it- thank god that most of the birds here weren't interested in humans. Wasn't the right season.

Karkat looked thoughtful before shaking his head, "No, not for now. We should call Aradia and her group and head back." He told them, they'd explored enough of the city for now and got what they could. "Better to go back early, the clouds are getting dark." All four of them grimaced.

Yeah, definitely time to head back.

"Hold on," Sollux said, handing the walkie to Karkat before digging out a certain other device from his pouch. All three of them went silent as Sollux turned it on, "Three twenty two PM, ran the fuck from some worms. Couldn't afford to strife them and had the chance to abscond, so we absconded. We're heading back now, I haven't found anything else for you bro, maybe next time. Fucking bullshit though, I thought we could find some more but eh- that's fine. Anyway, gotta go. Record end." Sollux carefully tucked the voice recorder in his pouch and nodded back to his friends.

They nodded back, Karkat glancing at the pouch and shaking his head.

Sollux smiled as he followed Karkat, Nepeta and Gamzee out the door and back into the sand-covered city. Another day for Mituna to hear.

...

He missed his brother.

But that was okay, he could still tell Mituna everything with his old voice recorder.

Chapter End Notes

And here's the first chapter!

And yes, this story will consistently have one or more panel so there's going to be illustrations for every chapter!

It's going to be difficult but hey, I'm apparently a masochist that has no self restraint and my self loathing has no ends!

I at least hope you enjoy this story and chapter and that you're looking forward to the next one!

See you next chapter!

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

I ended up drawing way more in this second chapter.
Uh, hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

With the death of the confirmed death of the basilisk, sound returned to the forest, no longer deathly silent with the creatures inhabiting the trees, ground and such hiding and staying still lest they end up dying as prey to the monster. The melody of nature played out uninhibited, the noise of something skittering along the tree bark, the chirps of birds, chittering of small animals, the rustling movement of other monsters- though they were smaller and much weaker compared to the basilisk that was one shotted by Eridan's crosshairs.

Said basilisk was now laid before the area of the laboratory, just near the edge- a sizable hole in its skull, mouth drooling with blood and an unknown brown liquid, supposedly it was poison or something, Dirk would busy himself with researching about it later on when given the chance but right now they would dismantle the body and get rid of it. Which left him and Eridan once again at the helm, they were the most skilled in dismantling animals. What with Dirk's time in a water-logged apocalypse and Eridan's lusii hunting.

Though it was still difficult since this was a monster that was very much larger than them in height, weight, length- its size was certainly huge.

Nonetheless, it was better to dismember and take what they could from the monster- the leather skin would be useful certainly. Not to mention its meat was thankfully not poisonous so it was safe to eat, as was most things were here with a few exceptions. They'd just found their source of food for the next few weeks. Not that they really needed it but it wouldn't do well to waste things in the apocalypse. Dirk would know.

And thankfully in this apocalypse, there weren't miles of water that separated him from society. He was actually standing on solid ground, on grass, dirt and concrete of the earth- and even though it was a monster infested apocalypse. It was still an apocalypse that he preferred to the one he grew up in, alone and isolated.

Seagulls and the occasional flock of drones heard from the distance, the salty ocean water permeating the air or just lingering in the background if he decided to stay inside-

"Are you goin' to pose there dramatically or are you actually gonna do some work there Dirk?"

Eridan's dry voice snapped him out of his thoughts, his eye twitched underneath his shades and he gripped the handle of his totally awesome unbreakable katana with one hand. "Who knows I might do both." He deadpans towards the seadweller who rolls his eyes at him.

"Both! Do both!" Mituna crowed as he leaned against the leathery skin, grinning widely. "Tulip this thing's fucking huge!"

Latula laughs, "Yeah it is! Nice job Eridan." She fingergunned him with a brilliantly bright smile.

Dirk's lips twitched upwards when he sees Eridan's irked face, "Howw many times do I havve to tell you not to call me that Tula." Eridan grumbled, glaring at Dirk when he caught sight of Dirk's lip twitch, "Stop standin' there Strider an' do somethin' already!"

Shwing

Right after Eridan snapped at Dirk, he *moved*, scratching a few slices into the leathery skin. It was tough though, and only a few cuts started bleeding. That was fine. Dirk stabbed his sword right into the center of an 'X' wound on the skin, using it as leverage to climb up the side. "This thing must be strong as shit, my usual slices aren't going through its skin properly... It'll be good leather to have." He says, patting the leather while still holding on to his sword.

Eridan snorted, he walked over just so he could go and sit on the dead corpse of the basilisk-like monster he'd sniped down. "No shit, wwhich is good. Wwe'll be fine for leather for a wwhile noww." He adjusted his way of sitting as Dirk leaned away from the corpse, sword digging in to the monster's hide, blood spilling a bit more at the action. "Wwith the fact wwe've got this thin' noww, do you think wwe should still head out for the city later on?"

Dirk shrugged and looked over towards Latula, who wanted to avoid having her hair get into her face just in case something unexpected happen, tied her hair in a loose ponytail. "Dunno, we still need some parts but we could always wait a while... What do you think Tula?"

The teal troll shrugged and smiled, "We could totally go to the city, we've been like- planning out the trip for a while now right? I mean, it'd still be cool if we wait a few days but we've been holed up in this lab and forest for sooo long, we could totally go out!" She exclaimed, giving a thumbs up to Dirk.

"GO OUT!!" Mituna repeated after her with an excited broken chitter.



"Sounds like a plan then, we're going out of the forest to the city tomorrow." Dirk said, dislodging his sword from the hilt and jumping back. Mituna let out a little yelp as he scrambled away to avoid getting stained with the dark reddish blood that came from the action.

"WATCH IT SHADES DICK!!"

"Whoops sorry Tuna."

Eridan gave Dirk an annoyed look, scowling at his shrug before focusing back down on the basilisk he was sitting on, "Guess in the mean time Dirk 'n I wwill be dismantlin' this thin'." He stood up, he used his sylladex to switch his casual hoodie and black pants for something more appropriate and something he could afford to stain rather than his normal clothing. Some heavy brown cargo pants, a black shirt and a dark grey apron. He didn't bother wearing gloves this time, the monster's blood wasn't poisonous

nor was toxic so it would be fine to get his hands dirty. He'd just have to wash them later on and no using a pair of gloves on this session.

Dirk grunted in agreement, changing from his own clothing to something similar to what Eridan was wearing. Only his apron was dark blue with a badly stitched patch of an old worn symbol slapped at the center of the apron. It was a certain pegasus' cutie mark, something Eridan found distasteful and Dirk pretty much knew that, which was part of the reason why he stitched the symbol into the apron in the first place. That and because he found a worn old My Little Pony t-shirt their last expedition out, it was too old and small to wear so he cut the symbol off and affixed it unto his apron.

He aimed a smirk at Eridan who flips him off. "You two get inside, this'll take a while." He told Latula and Mituna, the teal nodded while Mituna just tilted his head at him with obvious confusion. Though that confusion quickly changes into bright enthusiasm when Latula takes his attention.

"Hey babe why don't we go back inside, we could go practice some sweet tricks." She suggested, grinning brightly at her matesprit.

Mituna absolutely beamed, "YEAH!! LET'S DO THAT! EHEHEHE SWEET TRICKS!!"

Together they ran off back into the laboratory to do some 'sweet tricks' at the makeshift rink they'd created during the time they'd spent there.

"We'll see you dudes later! Let us know if you need anything!" Latula called out to behind her.

"SWEET TRICKS SWEET TRICKERS! LATER DUDES!" Mituna exclaimed, waving back, following his matesprit's actions. Happy and smiling.



Until he ended up tripping, "ACK! FUCK TULIP I TRIPPED!!!"

"Oh shit babe! Sick wipe out but you okay?"

"I TRIPPED FUCK-"

"Baby it's okay! C'mon, let me help you out-"

Eridan's fins pinned down and low as he watched Mituna start to spazz out, cursing and slurring as his happy persona degrades at his one little mistake. He's been better, so much better but it always made him more than a bit upset whenever he relapsed into the broken state of mind he'd almost constantly been within the dream bubbles in the past fuckton of sweeps that somehow didn't count as sweeps within the weird time period of the afterlife bullshit plane.

Whenever he felt like this, he was always hesitant to interact with Mituna, worried that he'd end up making him very upset- he'd let Latula deal with

him most of the time, especially during his worse off days where he could barely remember anything cohesive and forgot where he was and what happened. But thankfully, those days were rare and in between... they still happen though and Eridan could only hope for the best for his sort-of moirail.

A snap of fingers gain his attention, Dirk gives him a look, "Time to get to work Ampora. Tula's got Tuna, we should focus on getting this shitty basilisk's meat and leather, maybe some of its bones. No wait scratch that, definitely some of its bones. And also its weird brown saliva, I still never found out what it is, smells fucking rank though-" Dirk started, equipping his katana once more.

The seadweller rolled his eyes, "Oh shut the fuck up and start cutting Strider." He replied with a sneer, equipping a sharp spear.

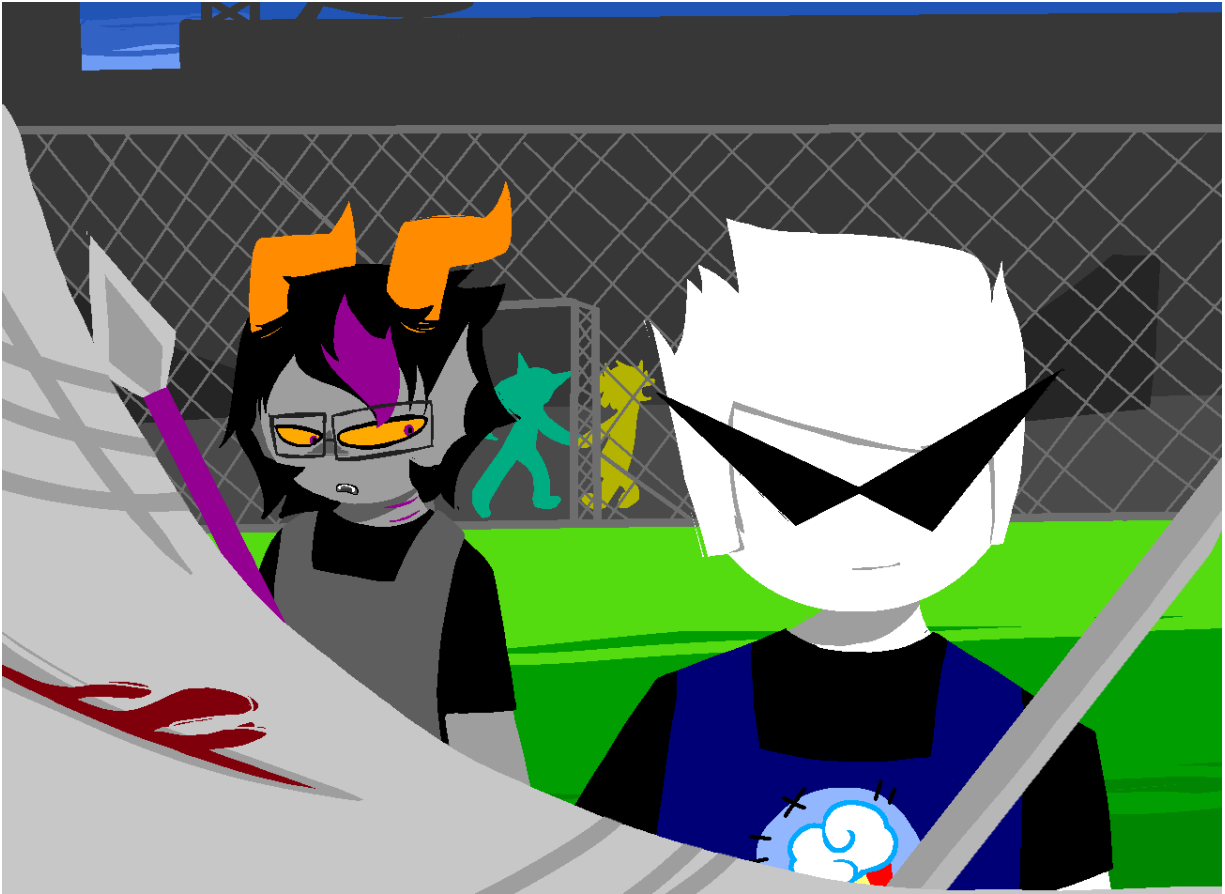
What? It wasn't like he was totally focused on guns. He was a master marksman sure but he'd be a fool to solely be masterful or skilled in one strifing style. He preferred long distance strifes though, so he mostly used his guns and crosshairs. But if necessary, he could use almost any weapon. Being dead gave you a lot of time on your hands, and other things could only pass the boredom. He preferred the spear or any polearm weapon on hand; I.e. the spear.

Dirk snorted, "A yes, your poking stick. What happened to the axe-like one?" He knew it was actually a halberd and Eridan knew that he knew, he just found it annoying when Dirk dumbled himself down and acted he didn't know.

Fuck did this human get on his nerves.

Behind them, Eridan and Dirk could here the faint '*clink*' as the chainlink fence's gate opened to let Latula and Mituna into the laboratory area, where their makeshift skateboard area was just nearby.

"You know exactly what happened to my damn halberd Dirk." Eridan muttered, giving him a scathing look aimed at his back much to which Dirk ignored and just smirked as he readied his sword.



Right, the halberd was still missing after Dirk punted it somewhere by 'accident' a few days ago in the forest. Back when a horde of weak but very annoying monsters tried to migrate and take over their forest.

Whoops.

Eridan sneered, then sighed, no use doing anything right now- they had a gigantic monster corpse to deal with first and foremost. Antagonistic pitch shenanigans can be saved for later.

The desert was hot, that was obvious, when you thought of deserts you thought of endless areas of sand and heat that covered the land for miles.

If one wasn't prepared, they'd end up being overcome by dehydration, overheating, all those unfortunate things that came from trekking through a desert without a source of water or a way to cool off.

From a sandy hill, a figure draped in a dark grey cloak, a dark red fabric half-mask tied to his face, and a pair of dark red reflective goggles strapped to over his eyes to protect them from the harsh sun, wind and sand. Over the distance, a city, abandoned and in ruin, occupied by countless of monsters, stood within the sandy desert. Piercing red eyes underneath the goggles observed the city.



It was a wonder that the city was totally overcome with sand, a desert that stretched out for miles... however this was probably one of the smallest

deserts to ever exist- or maybe not. The terrain of the new world changed from time to time, depending on various circumstances, though mostly unknown circumstances. Before this desert came into being, the area had once been a regular plain area, with trees, plants, a few cities and multiple towns- and then it gradually turned into a desolate, uninhabited area filled with sand and monsters in just a couple of years. Impossible? Maybe before, but now? Who knows on what this environment may become in the future. The towns had mostly disappeared into the sand, and only a few cities towered over the sand that seemed to slowly engulf them with every year.

The city before him was now mostly infested with monstrous worms and gigantic birds, a strange cross species that resembled between vultures, ravens and some sort of lacertilia- lizards. Maybe, they didn't just have feathers, they also had firm hides that reminded many of lizards in the occasional time they've managed to get the hides- either by the occasional hunt for the birds, or when the birds actually shed their old skin.

"Kankri, they should be coming back now right?"

Kankri Vantas stayed silent as he looked over the city, down there in that city was his little siblings and their friends. The thought makes him tighten his fists and beside him, Porrim grimaces and puts a hand on his shoulder. "They'll be fine Kankri. Come on, we should meet up with them at the rendezvous point." She told him.

"... Right." He finally spoke up and nodded stoically, shaking off Porrim's hand and stalking down the sandy hill.

Porrim watched him go for a moment, before following him. Aranea stood at the bottom of the hill, Kankri walks past her while Porrim stops by her. "... He's in a bad mood." Aranea notes aloud with a soft sigh.

"The anniversary is coming up in a week or so, you know how he gets Aranea." Porrim replied quietly, watching the albino walk. "Two years since then. He, Cronus, Sollux and Terezi hate the incoming week- at least the other three make the effort to not seem visibly upset. But Kankri..." Worry

enters her eyes underneath her own eye-wear as she gazes at the moving back of the eldest Vantas.

Aranea sighed, shaking her head, "We're going to be left behind. Come on Porrim, let's go." The move together, quickly catching up with Kankri.

Despite having been so far ahead of them, Kankri knew exactly what they were talking about.

Two years...

Their deaths weighed heavily on his mind even after all this time.

He hadn't seen Eridan's death, no one had apparently but Mituna and Latule...

He closed his eyes.



"Mituna? Mituna where are you?"

"KANKRI LOOK OUT!"

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH"

"MITUNA-"

"Take...care..'f..er..."

"WHY?!"

SHWING

"*KANKRI*-"

"Kankri."

He opened his eyes, he sees Porrim and Aranea looking at him in concern.
"It's nothing. Let's just go." He says stoically.

Chapter End Notes

Yeah this chapter ended up having five panels because I couldn't write much this chapter, and couldn't resist drawing.

Fun times!

At any rate, hope you all stay safe in your homes and have enjoyed the chapter!

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Session Kith was an established and old settlement that held more than four hundred or so people within it. Stationed mainly at the edge of remnants of an old suburban neighborhood, the main capital of Session Kith was it's largest base within the area, an old Betty Crocker factory. One of the oldest and last standing vestiges of the old society that came before the Apocalypse, before The Reckoning.

The reason why Session Kith stood for so long was both by luck and by the help of the Founders.

Four families founded Session kith, The Lalondes, The Striders, The Harleys, and finally The Egberts. Though both the Harley and Egbert families were particularly important seeing as they were the ones who had owned the factory before the unfortunate start of the impending apocalypse.

Jacob Harley had previously been a billionaire before everything started, an entrepreneur and explorer at first that had seen firsthand on the shifting environments when they started. When he heard on how that these shifts were steadily increasing and had no clear signs of stopping, he returned to America with his family and started to prepare. From there, he started contacting the three other families in hopes to keep them together and survive through whatever would happen in the future.

He first contacted his sister, Janet Egbert, who had been in charge of the factory for the majority of her life before she retired and started a family of her own. Her husband had died but she had given birth to a lovely son, who in turn provided her both a granddaughter as well as a grandson, her daughter-in-law unfortunately perished after giving birth to James' youngest much to their grief. But at least they had little John in the end who was very much loved by both father and grandmother. When Jacob contacted her, she

trusted his word and started to prepare herself and her family, eventually moving to the factory when the start of the apocalypse happened.

Jacob then contacted a dear friend of his, a young woman who he'd taken in as his protege back in the day, Roxanne Lalonde who had already started in preparing herself and her family. She had been a scientist in the old SkaiaNet labs, though she had quit her job after she largely protested against the lab and the government when they made the decision to first downplay the occurring environmental shifts and mutations, she couldn't really change and she knew if she stayed she wouldn't be able to return to her family. Roxanne immediately gathered her daughters from their old house that had been situated near the laboratory and moved them when Jacob contacted her, providing all the help she could as a woman with high intelligence and several doctorates.

Jacob then contacted a third family on Roxanne's suggestion, Dereck Strider was the biological father to Roxanne's daughters and his own sons. Plenty of people chalked him up as a cruel man, and his way to raise his sons would even fall under abusive- but Dereck Strider genuinely cared for his family. He loved his sons, even though for years, he couldn't stand being called 'Dad' and favored 'Bro' since he felt as if he wasn't cut out to being a father, or even a brother but brother would be enough for him. He was also paranoid and abrasive, Roxanne had told him about the mutations and instantly thought on how things could get worse. So he trained his 'brothers', giving them an abnormal childhood compared most other children. He was briefly suspicious over Jacob before easily joining his side once he heard from Roxanne.

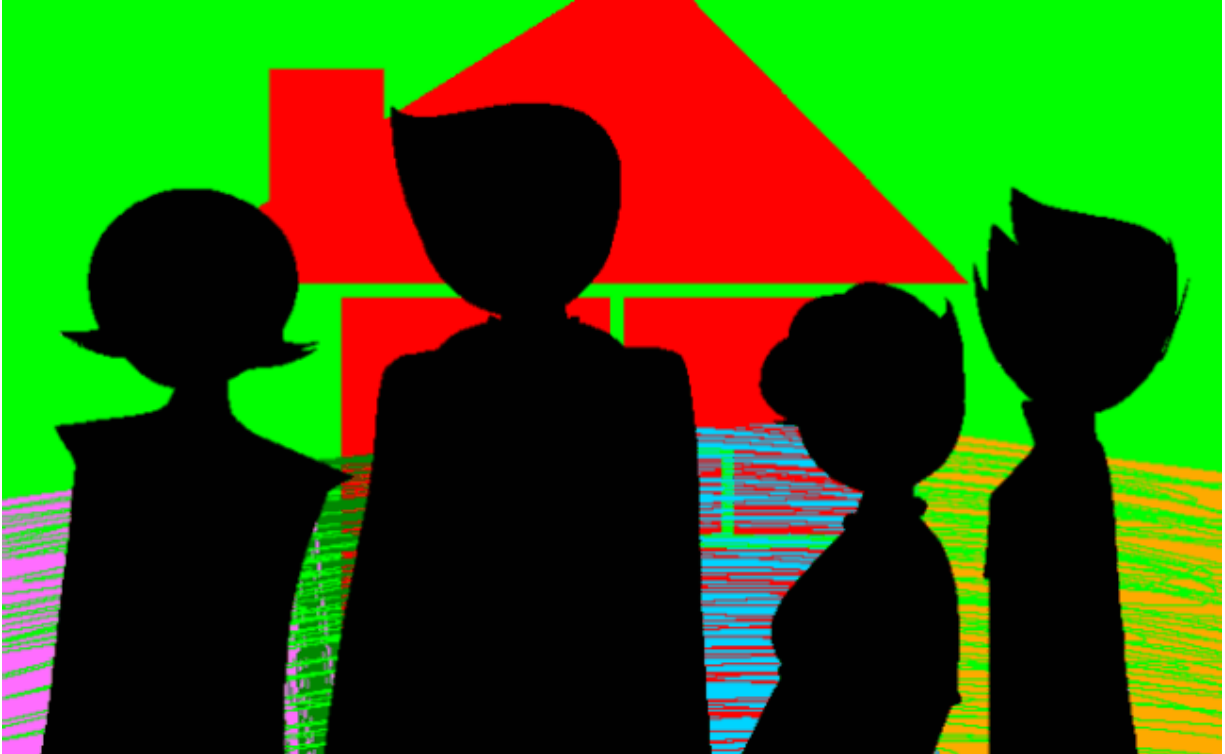
And like that, four families unified and would soon found Session Kith.



No one really knows how the name came to be, or how the symbol of Session Kith became what it was- a bright red house with a green background. But no one cared, not in the present day apocalypse.

Though whenever Session Kith was defending itself from hostile factions, groups and organizations, the colors would invert. A new symbol would temporarily come to symbolize their willingness to fight and defend themselves, a bright green house standing on a bright red background.

The color inversion had happened a few handful of times as time moved on, it had especially started after things seemed to have 'settled' after The Reckoning and people were fighting over resources and such. Session Kith stood strong against its adversaries. It wasn't the largest settlement of society, but it was certainly strong and mostly peaceful, however it was not to be underestimated.



Among the founders, only two remain.

Janet Egbert having passed away a few years into the apocalypse, though it was not due to old age, rather she died in a blaze of glory against an old adversary to Jacob himself.

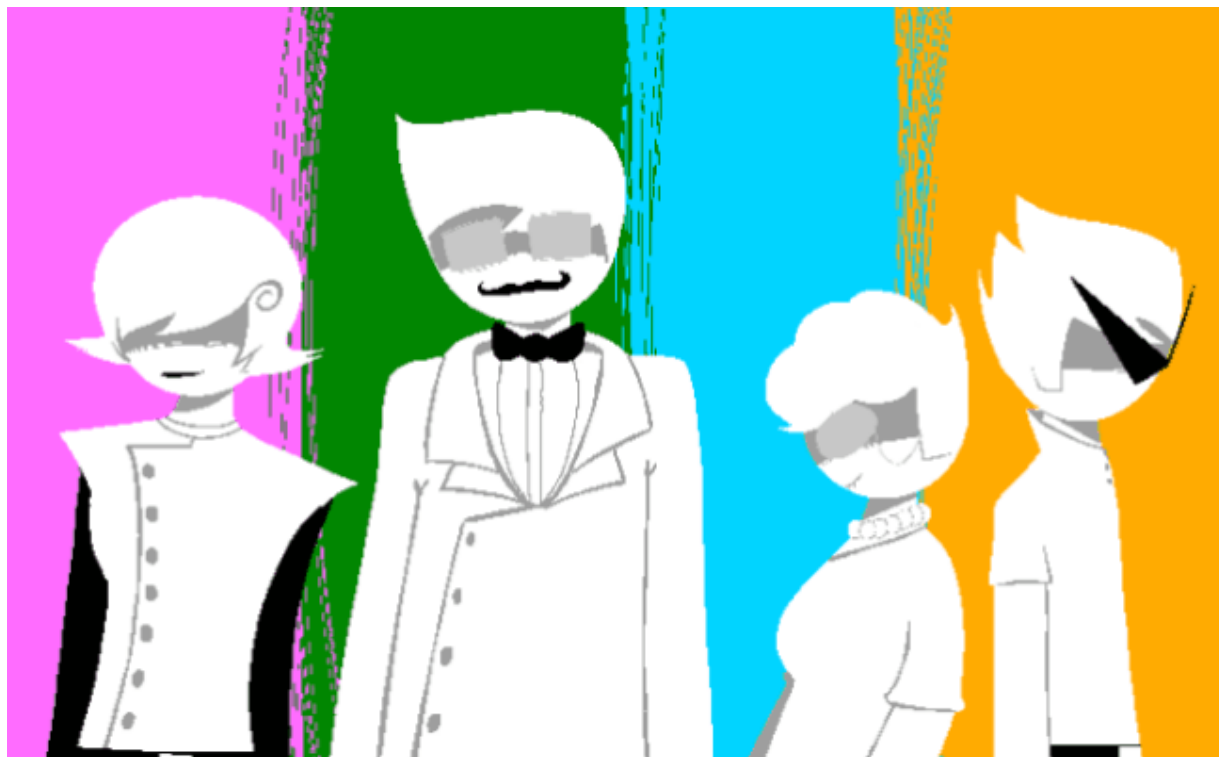
Dereck Strider disappeared years later, presumed dead after a mission gone wrong. A tragedy that happened once more in his youngest son Dirk Strider, leaving the eldest son Dave as the last Strider of Session Kith.

Jacob Harley stepped down as leader after his disappearance, old and weary, but still very much alive.

Roxanne became co-leader to Session Kith alongside Janet Egbert's son, James Egbert.

Lately however in the latest years, James Egbert became full time leader as Roxanne seemed to fell ill to an apparent side effect to her own powers as an adult adroit. Not even Jane, James' oldest could heal her despite being

the best healer of their faction. Jacob took to himself into helping James the best he could as the last of his friend and fellow founder slowly spiraled into insanity.



Within the dimness of the room, an old man sat down beside a bed. Hunched over as he looked over the person sleeping underneath the purple covers.

It's eerily silent, save for their quiet breathes but his breath is far louder than his despite being so quiet. Had he not known better, he would have thought that he was the only person alive in the room. However, thankfully, that was not the case.

He couldn't bear it if that was true.

He stayed within the dimness of the room, not minding on how little light there was. He'd gotten used to it. And even if he turned the light on, the light would flicker and die like a candle if he tried to turn it on now of all

times, which would not only disturb the slumbering person on the bed but also destroy the light bulb which would be a waste.

The old man sighed quietly, eyes closing briefly in thought, though they opened when he heard the door creak open and light spilled into the room. It brightened the room ever so slightly, but despite the fact the door was wide open and that there was light pouring into the space of the room- the room remained very dim.



"Grandpa?"

At the doorway, his grandson stood, hesitantly taking a step inside, standing on top of the ragged and old faded pink cat rug. Jake Harley was hesitant to

enter and Jacob understood his hesitance, he'd been hesitant to enter and stay within the room for more than an hour or so at the beginning but he'd been stubborn to stay besides her side whenever she was like this.

"Jake. What is it my boy?" He asked quietly, glancing at his grandson before back to the sleeping woman tucked into bed. "Is it time for lunch already?" He was starting to feel a bit peckish.

Jake peered into the room, his eyes adjusting to the dimness quickly, he took a quick glance around the room before focusing on the slumbering woman tucked into bed, the mother of his best friend Roxanne Lalonde. "Erm, yes, it's almost time for lunch Grandpa." He answered before pausing, "... How is she?" He finally asked, ears pinned down as he could only see the disheveled hair of the once brilliant woman he and many others had admired for so long.

Just a couple of years ago, she'd been this powerhouse of a woman. Bright, energetic and wittingly sharp- not that she still wasn't, she had good days when she seemed just fine if just a bit off. She was still very much strong, one of the strongest in their faction but...

Jacob shook his head, "She's still sleeping as far as I can tell." He replied softly as his grandson joined him by his side, taking a spare chair to sit by him. "She hasn't done anything else." Thankfully, he didn't say.

Jake's frowned, ears flicking as he looked at Roxanne.



In the dark she looked frail, tucked underneath her blanket and her hair disheveled and unkempt from how she'd been staying the whole day in bed. Her skin had turned darker, tinged with blue that subtly rippled as she slept. At least it wasn't grey, *that* was a clear sign that things had become worse for her.

No one knows why Roxanne had turned this ill, that her sanity had slowly crumbled, but the most suspecting theory was because of her powers as an *adroit*. Which spelled out trouble seeing as Roxy had similar powers as hers. Jake didn't want to lose another of his best friend, especially not because of this. They'd already lost Dirk and...

Jake took in a deep breath, ears pinned down once more as he shook his head. No point in thinking out negative thoughts! It was best to stay optimistic, for the sake of everyone.

Jacob smiled slightly at the fire of determination in his grandson's eyes. What a lovely and familiar sight, had his own eyes burned that bright years

before? At the start of this damned apocalypse? Back when he had everyone he loved by his side and that his optimism and confidence was strong enough to battle against whatever foe or unfortunate circumstance as long as he and his friends stuck together?

Perhaps.

But that was a long time ago.

When Janet and Dereck were still alive, and Roxanne wasn't a shadow of herself half of the time.

"Why don't you go on ahead Jake, I'll follow soon afterwards." Jacob nudged him.

Jake grins at his grandfather and nods, "Alright! I'll tell Jade and the others, and I'll save a seat for you." He exclaims, wincing as Roxanne shifts on the bed- whoops, better not wake the poor mother up. "Sorry." He whispers before standing up and leaving the room, he left the door open for Jacob to close when he himself would leave the room.

The old man chuckles quietly at his antics, looking at the doorway with a fond look on his face. He sighs and shakes his head before standing himself, "Well, I should be off. Don't worry Rox, I'll come back with some food for you as always. Sleep well darling." He murmurs to his once-protege and dearest friend.

He dearly hoped that one day, Roxanne would get better. That she'd end up living a long and fulfilling life despite the apocalypse before them.

But on a more morbid note, he hoped that he wouldn't live long enough to see her fall, even if there was a chance to see her rise once more- he'd rather remember the Roxanne he knew, the bright young girl that he had took in years before with an incredible mind and an utter whirlwind of an intelligent woman that helped make the foundation of Session Kith rather than see... *this*; a woman slowly sinking into insanity due to an unforeseen side affect of her own powers or of an illness that no one knew of. Roxanne

was getting worse by the month, if things didn't turn for the better, he'd fear that month would turn into weeks, then to days, then...

Jacob was a very old man, and it was a fear of his to outlive everyone he loved. He'd already outlived his wife, his sister, his sons and daughter, a close friend and various other people. He didn't want to outlive his oldest friend, dear James, his grandchildren and their friends.

But he was too much of a coward to take his own life or purposefully sabotage himself, and James had told him that he wouldn't be on any expedition so he couldn't die in action like he had fantasized much in his youth and as of the death of Janet who had died tragically yet wondrously in a blaze of blue fire years ago. A true heroine his late sister was.

And he? Well... He was a very old man that was so tired of living.

He'd seen enough tragedy in his long lifetime, he'd rather avoid seeing even more. Especially coming from Roxanne, the woman he had considered his own daughter.

Jacob shook his head and smiled, it didn't even reach the wrinkles underneath his eyes as he focused back on Roxanne. "Sleep well lass." He repeats quietly, leaning over to press a kiss against her forehead, patting her blanketed shoulder in comfort before leaning away.

Only to gasp sharply when he felt an iron grip on his wrist, and Roxanne's eyes were suddenly wide open. Her eyes, white on pink on black- the black of her iris had turned white while the white of her sclera had turned black in contrast. A small blurry ring of dark blue circled in her pupils, dancing on the pink of her eyes which figuratively blazed with insanity and out-worldly knowledge that no man should ever know.

"*Jacob...*" Roxanne whispers, an odd echo in her tone that makes Jacob freeze in place. He doesn't know if his old heart can take this, but he has no choice but to stay frozen, listen and watch Roxanne's eyes that bore into his own. "*The dead are alive again.*" There's an odd twitch of her lips, a ghost of a smile, "*The dead are alive but they aren't our dead. Not really. Not yet.*" She whispers to him and for a moment, he could see them. Four

figures within the darkness of Roxanne's eyes... as well as encroaching *things* and interconnected white lines that connected to *somewhere*.



Jacob is speechless, he cannot fathom what was currently happening right now, what *was* happening right now? Roxanne smiled, a fragment of the Roxanne he knew before is there, in that smile. "*Find the Knight, her Heir and the two Princes... Find the Knight... Find the... k..ight...*" Her eyes flutter shut and her iron grip fades, slacking and falling back down to the bed.

The old man is left to stand alone within the dimness of the room. Unsure on what had happened, but utterly rattled beyond comprehension.

Elsewhere, Latula shivers, hand coming to her nape and a look of confusion on her face. Inevitably, she shrugs it off to focus on more important things.

Mainly Mituna utterly wrecking Dirk in the video game, she's torn between who to cheer for, but since Eridan was cheering Mituna on, she decides to back her moirail on instead. Mituna wouldn't mind, he'd act all pouty but she knows he knows she meant well.

She grinned and hollered as Mituna performed the ultimate digital smackdown on Dirk who groans.

Whatever she'd been feeling must've been nothing.

Yeah, just nothing.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter four!

And with two gifs! Simple really.

Sorry , motivation lately has been dragging me down along with a few other things but stories are slowly getting updated!

Also, word counts in this chapter will be relatively short since I've got drawings included here. Seems like a fair thing to do, I think. I don't know, but the chapter definitely isn't as long as my other stories chapters.

So this story will be slow, but at least it has pictures right?

At any case, I hope you enjoyed!

Also also, I hope that everyone is staying safe during quarantine.

Hopefully this'll all pass and that everyone will be relatively okay in the end. Stay safe everyone!

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Was contemplating on what chapter this would be, ended up focusing on Jake, Roxy and Jane.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There was something both eerie and comforting to silence.

The lack of loud sounds, the seemingly stillness of the air...

Silence was both comforting and dangerous in the apocalypse, depending on the area where the silence pervaded and lingered.







The area Jake currently was in counted for both eerie and dangerous, but there was a touch bit of comfort underneath. Just a little bit. Mostly because of how familiar and how used to Jake was to it. He and the others have been here countless of times, and it's been mostly identified as a One-Eyed Zone. Identified by the one-eyed skull that was on every sign posted at the various entrances and exits of the zone area along with the warnings to keep a gas-mask or air or healing-oriented adroit with them.

Previously the Zone had been labelled as a Three-Eyed place, but his grandfather and grandaunt had managed to wrangle the place and lessen the danger to the point that it was *mostly* a harmless area... As long as you timed it just fine and was appropriately careful. It was why there was a previous carving of a skull with two eyes underneath every No-Eyed sign.

Though grandpa and late grandaunt Janet, bless her soul, had mostly tamed the area, it still had its very dangerous moments. Especially during the 'spring' of the year. Not many people were allowed in the area, the No-Eyed signs were taken down to show the carvings of Three-Eyed skulls.

Skulls were always a symbol of danger, even in the past before the apocalypse, but his grandpa had morphed them into more after the apocalypse. Creating the 'Eyed Skull Danger System'. Somewhat ridiculous but no doubt useful in the long run, and it spread to the point it was the most common way to identify danger.

There were five levels, each with sublevels depending on the area but the gist of it were the five levels. No-Eyed. One-Eyed. Two-Eyes. Three-Eyes. Four-Eyes. And finally, Cross-Eyes, though some people called the last level X-Eyed.

	No eyes: Safe; Minimal Danger Strife Capable; Absconding Not Required
	One Eye: Danger; Level One Strife Capable; Abscond if Preferred
	Two eyes: Danger; Level Two Strife Capable; Abscond If Preferred
	Three Eyes: Danger; Level Three Strife If Capable; Abscond If Required
	Four Eyes: Danger; Level Four Strife If Necessary; Abscond Required And Most Optimal Choice
	Crossed Eyes: Danger; Level Five (HIGHEST THREAT COUNT) ABSCOND DO NOT ENGAGE ABSCOND OR DIE

"You ever wonder on what this place would have been like without all this shit?" Roxy questioned from behind him, it broke through the silence and almost startled Jake. Almost. Jake's canine ears twitched as Roxy continued, "I mean, I know this place used to be like, a mall but- if the apocalypse didn't happen what do you think this place really would've been like?"

Jane hummed quietly, "Busy probably. There'd be more people, everyone would just be walking around and do whatever they want. No weapons though." She added in causing Roxy to mock gasp. Jane rolled her eyes at the sound, knowing that Roxy no doubt be hugging their gun to their chest.

"I know, a hard thing to grasp but that was how things were Pre-Reckoning. People couldn't go out with weapons on their persons on the daily, nor did they have to deal with mutant plants, animals, etc. You know this Roxy."

Roxy snickered, "I know but it's so weird to think of it like that." They replied, stepping over the large vines that coiled around on the ground. "No weapons, no mutants, no nothing... Kind of sounds boring tee-bee-ach."

More like it sounded nice, Jake thought to himself. Without weapons, mutants, just nothing, things would've been far more different. Everyone might've been happy, safe... Unfortunately that couldn't be a guarantee and Jake knew that he was seeing at it with a rather tinted view since nothing could be perfect. But Jake could imagine it and keep it to himself. "Indeed, lord knows what could happen in a life like that, a verible flat tire for sure."

The banter helps abate the silence, though eerie and the tiniest bit comforting, it was a welcomed thing for Jake and his enhanced hearing.

"So, what are we aiming for Janey? Harvest or collection?" Roxy asked as they continued their trek through the area, the foliage growing as they went deeper to the center of the Zone.

Jane glanced back, light glinting off the lens of her customized gas mask. "Harvest. We're out of anesthetic and sleep medication. Though we might as well collect while we're at it, Bec deserves a treat or two." She answered, "Though John has said that we should check out the area, see how things are and if we need to take down the signs now or later on. It is that time of season." She adds after a thought.

Seasons were complicated things now that the environment was a randomized hellscape. It could snow in one area and be sweltering hot not even a meter from said area. Snow and sand in the same place was common now, and so was various other things.

"Ah, so that's why you wanted me along." Jake notes as he sees the incoming bridge. "Darb."

"Well, there's that and I thought you'd want to be out of the base for a while. It's been a while since all three of us went on a mission, I've been so busy with the infirmary, you with your training and Roxy with, well, being Roxy." Jane mused, Roxy cackled, a loud but muffled sound from underneath their mask. "What *have* you been doing Rolal?"

Even with the mask on, both raven-haired teens could tell their friend sported a Cheshire smile. "You know, a few things here and there." They answered in the most vague tone and way possible. Jake shared a look of exasperation with Jane, Roxy cackled even harder at that. "Being serious though, I've just been helping out your dad and Johnny boy. Davey too when I can, but you know how stubborn he can be... Also I've been trying to look into my mom's notes, not much progress there." They finally answered truthfully with a sigh.

Ah, that made sense.

"I'm sure you'll be able to crack your mother's notes Roxy." Jake reassured them, "You're one of the smartest eggs I know."

Jane nodded in agreement, "You'll have them cracked in no time."

Roxy smiled an unseen smile, but they all knew it was there, "Aw, thanks babes."

They arrived at the bridge, it wasn't that long and visually it didn't seem the most stable thing. It didn't even have guardrails! However it was actually quite sturdy and was one of the more reliable and safe pathways towards the center, even without the aforementioned missing guardrails. Jake didn't hesitate to cross, the bridge barely even moving as he and Jane stepped on the hanging metal-made pathway.

The pathway hung over level that was overtaken by vines, trees and just general wild life. There were bright blue pods littering around the area, grown from the vines that were strewn around. Dangerous things those flowers, pretty to look at but their pollen were slightly poisonous and a strong sleeping agent. The vines themselves weren't that dangerous... at the moment anyway.

While the two of them made their way on the bridge, Roxy knelt down and temporarily set aside their gun. Both Jane and Jake took notice. "Roxy, what are you doing?"



"Looking over the edge... Also there's an almost fully grown small fourlace besides my gun." Roxy motioned to said bright blue rose flowers with thread-like four petaled lace in the middle of the bright blue rose.

Fourlace, that's what they called the flowers. Though their 'full' name was 'Sleeping Laced Roses'.

Just one sniff of the pollen could knock out a person for a period of time that depended on how much pollen they'd inhaled or consumed.

Naturally, sleeping in the area of these flowers was very dangerous because you would never wake up if you kept inhaling the flowers in your sleep. And that was just the flowers.



"Oh! Alright, hold on. My, I completely missed that specimen." Jane exclaimed, "Hold on, I'll get it." She got off the bridge to join Roxy at the edge to get to the flower. Jake hummed, waiting on the bridge for both of his friends to continue their pathway into the area.

It wasn't fully grown and it was small, just around the size of her palms. Not bad.

Jane checked the flower's petals, looking for any bugs or damage to it. It was fully in tact, which was rare at this range from the middle of the Zone. She took out a small knife from her bags, carefully cutting the rose from its base on the vine.

While Jane was getting the flower off the vine, Roxy was peering down the edge.

Not much of the first level of the building, the smaller pods of bright blue were eye catching even in the darkness, intertwined and growing from the various vines that covered the ground. They couldn't see anything moving down there, so that was good at least, meant that it hadn't started yet or it hadn't spread completely to the edge yet.

There was that and the fact that Jake didn't seem to hear anything bad so that was extra good.

"Got it!" Jane cupped the flower in one palm, she handed it over to Roxy so she could brush the pollen off her gloves and knife, slipping the sharp tool back into her bag while Roxy held the flower.

Roxy looked down to the flower, a dark blue near black sphere appeared around the flower, covering it completely before shrinking down to the point it disappeared. "Alright, I got it, let's get back on track!" They cheered, brushing the leftover pollen from their gloves and grabbed their gun and standing up with Jane.

"Alright then, let's continue on." Jake exclaimed, turning around once both his friends were back on the bridge and trudged on towards the center of the Zone. The bridge barely moving underneath the weight of three people despite hanging slightly.

The giant tree growing within the hall was thankfully still, no sign of movement whatsoever and Jake couldn't hear anything shifting. Yet.

"Hear anything?" Jane asked once they crossed the bridge, looking around to see if she could spot any other mature roses but to her disappointment, there were none. Just blue pods of immature Sleeping Laces. It'd been lucky that they came across one mature one away from the center at this time of season. "No skittering, thumps?"

Jake shook his head, "No, nothing of the sort. So far just the ever comforting eerie silence and the occasional rustle of the wind." He replied

with a sigh, "Perhaps we're early, or the season has come late?" He suggested, looking down at a nearby vine.

Roxy hummed, "I dunno Jakey, Davey's clock is always on time. And it didn't seem like anything would like, delay the season. So maybe we are early, just a tiny bit, but I don't think it'll be delayed." They reasoned, straining to keep an ear out. "Well, maybe it is delayed but that possibility would be... *infinitesimal*." They stressed smugly.

Both Jane and Jake paused and Jake looked back at Roxy, if he wasn't wearing his mask no doubt Roxy would see the pointed and slightly embarrassed frown on his face. Jane let out an amused, "*Hoo hoo hoo*." As Roxy stood there, holding their gun with an air of innocence surrounding them.



"You are horrible. I hate you." Jake tells them while Jane grabbed the neck of her trident, "You get it wrong *one time* and *this is what happens*."

Roxy's air of false innocence strengthened, "I have no idea what you're talkin' 'bout Jakey."

"Utterly abhorrent."

"Love you too boo."

Jane 'hoo'd' once more with restrained laughter, tugging her trident free and motioning her friends to move. "Come along now, we have somewhere to go and things to do." She urged, reminding them of their purpose in the overgrown ruins of the once-mall. Reluctantly, Jake continued with Roxy happily coming along. What treats her friends were, she could never imagine a life without them by her side.

~~That was a lie, she could and that life is sad and terrifying, she would rather want to avoid it. She'd already lost one friend after all she can't lose the others.~~

Their banter unfortunately falls silent as they continued on, Jake needed to keep his hearing out after all, the deeper they went into the territory the more danger they could possibly be in.

They were at the middle point, the carved wall with the ragged paper sign was there, and there was even a couple of mature roses as well. Though right now, they weren't Jane's focus, she was the lookout even if Jake couldn't hear anything. Better safe than sorry, something her father, granduncle, Roxy's mother and various others instilled in her. Better safe than dead was the unsaid but more related phrase however.

The three hide behind the wall, backs against the scarred and pollen-covered wall, a good bath would do them good when they came back, Jane took the edge, the mirror end of her trident peeking out of the wall for her to use. To scout and see if anything unfavorable was within the deeper recess of the Zone. Jake leaned against the wall behind him, arms crossed and vaguely feeling the carved letters behind him on the wall. Besides him, Roxy leaned on the wall as well before leaning away from it and instead towards Jake, facing him and giving him a poke.



Jane ignored the silent passive aggressive conversation happening between her two friends, focusing more into the mirror. Silence and stillness within the area, the sight of the mostly buried bones and skulls didn't bother her anymore, as long as she didn't look at them for too long. The amount of vines more than doubled, along with the Sleeping Laced Roses. She can already see more matured flowers within the room. That's good, they could perhaps meet their quota and leave- after checking on things of course.

Nothing seemed to be there, and Jake would have said something if something was moving in there...

"Alright, let's get what we can here and then continue on."

Chapter End Notes

Also yes.

Non-Binary Roxy. I haven't thought much into it, but I just wanted to use Roxy's design from Homestuck2 because I love his designs. Or maybe I might have them become genderfluid? Honestly the

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